

IRI Index II: Parliamentary Elections

IRI's poll probed voter attitudes towards the upcoming parliamentary elections. The poll found high levels of interest among voters as well as more evidence that President Musharraf is paying a political price for the current conditions in the country. The poll also found that the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) has emerged as the most popular party in Pakistan.

- **Voters are concerned about the fairness of future elections.** When asked if they thought that elections under President Musharraf in uniform as Chief of Army Staff will be free and fair, 31 percent said yes and 59 percent said no. By a margin of two-to-one, voters said they would support a scenario where Musharraf resigned from office, a caretaker government was installed, and then free and fair elections were held; 52 percent said that they would support such a scenario while 23 percent were opposed.
- **There is an increasing interest in the upcoming parliamentary elections,** likely due to the recent political unrest and resulting activism. In the February/March poll, 82 percent of respondents said that they intended to vote; that number is up 12 points to 94 percent. In addition, 93 percent report that they are registered to vote.
- **PPPP is now the most popular party in Pakistan.** In the February/March poll, the PPPP led Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) 26 percent to 24 percent. In the latest poll, PPPP increased that lead. Those indicating that they would vote for PPPP increased six points to 32 percent, while 23 percent said that they would vote for PML-Q. Also worth noting is Nawaz Sharif's backed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) increase to 19 percent, up from 15 percent in the February/March poll. In both cases, the PPPP and PML-N increase is fueled by a declining number of undecided, which dropped by nine points over the course of the two polls.
- **PML-N beats PML-Q in Punjab.** Of particular interest is PML-N's performance in the Punjab (Pakistan's largest province and Musharraf's base), where it topped the field with 30 percent of the vote, up seven points since February/March; PML-Q received 27 percent (down 3 percent), PPPP received 22 percent (up 5 percent), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) received five percent (up 3 percent) and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) received four percent (up 1 percent).
- **PPPP led the field in every other province.**

Province	PPPP	PML-Q	MQM	PML-N	MMA	PTI	ANP*	PKMAP**	BNP***
Sindh	58% (+1)	14% (+5)	6% (-5)	4% (+1)	2% (-2)	2% (+2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
NWFP****	25% (+14)	20% (+2)	0% (0)	11% (+2)	9% (-1)	9% (+4)	7% (+1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Balochistan	34% (+12)	27% (-17)	0% (0)	0% (0)	18% (+10)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7% (+2)	3% (-4)

*Awami National Party ** Pakhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party *** Balochistan National Party ****Northwest Frontier Province

(more)

IRI Index II: Parliamentary Elections – Page Two

- As has historically been the case over the course of IRI polling, Pakistanis exhibit strong party loyalty. In the June/July poll, 77 percent of voters said that they would definitely vote for their party of choice; this is an increase of nine points since February/March. Among the major parties, party loyalty was highest with PPPP voters, with 90 percent saying they would definitely vote for their party, with PML-Q and PML-N coming in second and third with 86 percent and 85 percent, respectively.

IRI's poll also tested the political viability of potential party coalitions. As was evident in previous polls, voters continue to express support for party cooperation. The poll also found increasing levels of support for opposition party coalitions while the ruling party coalition saw its vote-share decline.

- **A majority of voters support a Grand Opposition Alliance.** When asked if they would support a Grand Opposition Alliance to challenge the government, 50 percent of voters indicated that they would while 24 percent were opposed.
- **PML-Q voters are against a coalition with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).** The ruling coalition did not fare as well as the opposition; only 11 percent said that PML-Q and MQM (parties currently in alliance with Musharraf) should keep their coalition while 69 percent said that they should not. MQM voters were more likely than PML-Q voters to support continuing the partnership, with 89 percent saying they should stay together; 63 percent of PML-Q voters said that they should not.
- **A PPPP / PML-N coalition would receive 47 percent of the vote.** Voters were asked who they would support in hypothetical election match-ups involving different party coalitions. In the first scenario, they were presented with the choices of a PML-Q / MQM coalition, a PPPP / PML-N coalition and MMA.
 - 47 percent said that they would vote for PPPP / PML-N
 - 7 percent said PML-Q / MQM
 - 7 percent said MMA
 - 19 percent said others
- **A PPPP / PML-Q coalition would receive 42 percent of the vote.** With talk of a potential deal between Musharraf and Bhutto, the poll also tested the electoral viability of a potential partnership. In a head-to-head match-up, a PML-Q / PPPP coalition garnered 42 percent of the vote, while a PML-N / MMA / PTI coalition would receive 22 percent; 17 percent said others.

As the judicial crisis unfolded, there were reports that supporters of the Chief Justice were considering the formation of their own party. Twenty-nine percent said they would support such a party, another 22 percent said maybe, and 37 percent replied no.

(more)

IRI Index II: Parliamentary Elections – Page Three

Finally, with the government having said that the exiled leaders would not be allowed to return to Pakistan to participate in the upcoming elections, the poll asked voters if they agreed or disagree with that decision. As has been consistent throughout IRI's polling, voters voiced overwhelming support for the exiles; 17 percent said that they agreed with the government's decision and 78 percent were opposed.

###